

Dr. Joseph Skhra, an ordained Roman Catholic Deacon, was the Director of the Family Medicine Department and Director of Pastoral Care for many years at the now-closed St. Michael's Hospital. Betts Skhra, a scholar and leader in her own right, holds two degrees in nursing, worked within the field for many years, and was the long-time chairperson of the St. Michael's Community Board. Moreover, Betts Skhra is a founding member of Broadway School of Music and the Arts.

Their collective faith and deep sense of spirituality has healed, and continues to heal, the bodies, and more importantly, the heart and soul of the working class people of this neighborhood. They both continue to provide spiritual guidance to the elderly at Lourexis, Alexia Manor and Mead House. Additionally, the Skrha's continue their advocacy on behalf of University Settlement, The Broadway School of Music and the Arts, Our Lady of Lourdes Church and School, and the Cleveland Sight Center.

The Skrha's community service and heart are an inextricable facet of the light that brings comfort, hope and possibility along the streets and within the homes of our North Broadway community. Their leadership and dedication has made a permanent, positive difference within the lives of countless individuals and families—including mine.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition to Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Betts Skhra, for creating a symphony of love and strength that continues to resound within the hearts and minds of their children, grandchildren and the countless individuals whose lives they've touched along their journey. I offer to both of them my gratitude and admiration for being invaluable role models for many of us whose paths have crossed with theirs as they continue to inspire us all to reach for our dreams, to live in service to others, and to never forget where we came from.

COMMENDING CHAIRMAN TAYLOR  
AND YOUNG

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 16, 2004

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend both Chairman TAYLOR and Chairman YOUNG for their efforts to eliminate Federal funding of land acquisitions in the FY05 Department of Interior appropriations bill. I, along with several of my colleagues, have been fighting this battle for some time, and I am pleased with today's results. Federal land acquisitions have been the reason for my opposition to the Interior appropriations bill in the past, but now I can support this legislation.

I offered legislation that accomplishes almost exactly what Chairmen TAYLOR and YOUNG are proposing in the FY05 Interior appropriations bill. H.R. 1517, The Land Reinvestment Act, simply eliminates Federal land acquisitions by zeroing out the land and water conservation fund's Federal expenditures. I want to note that State side assistance will remain untouched and I again commend my colleague's actions for keeping that program funded.

The Federal Government is the nation's largest single landowner. The FY05 Interior

appropriations bill sends a clear message that Congress will no longer tolerate Federal land grabs. I am very pleased by my colleagues efforts and look forward to supporting this legislation.

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE ACT

HON. CAROLYN C. KILPATRICK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 16, 2004

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, since women were allowed to serve in combat, we have been stunned from time to time by stories of sexual assault and abuse within military circles. In response to numerous reports of female troops deployed in Iraq being sexually assaulted by fellow soldiers, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld established a task force to review its policies and programs concerning sexual assault and the treatment and support of victims.

Several weeks ago the Sexual Assault Task Force reported its findings, and it put a spotlight on serious deficiencies in the way the military has handled sexual assault cases. For example, the Department of Defense has no system for tracking reports of sexual assault; a lack of privacy and confidentiality dissuades victims from reporting incidents of sexual abuse; DoD lacks uniform policies and program to coordinate care and support for sexual assault victims; and there is no commonly accepted definition of sexual assault.

The Secretary's Task Force report does a good job of identifying shortcomings in its management of sexual abuse cases, but it is wanting in arriving at hard solutions for eliminating the problem. For that reason, I am introducing legislation today that would authorize the establishment of the Office of Victim Advocate at the Secretary level.

The DoD Office of the Victim Advocate would provide access to services for victims and survivors associated with the military. Moreover, it would establish policies procedures and practices by which the privacy and confidentiality of persons seeking assistance for assaults and abuse inflicted upon them by military personnel can be protected. The Office would review complaints of persons and investigate the ones where victims may be in need of or benefit from services of a victim advocate. The proposed Office would evaluate the delivery of services by the various military departments and coordinate the services provided by those departments.

The Defense Department can be more aggressive in its handling of sexual abuse cases and that is the goal and mission of the Office of the Victim Advocate. I am hopeful that my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee will assign this issue a high priority within the Office of the Secretary of Defense and support this legislation.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION SHORTCOMINGS

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 16, 2004

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member commends to his colleagues the following editorial from the May 27, 2004, Lincoln Journal Star. The editorial highlights some of the shortcomings of the Transportation Security Administration and its baggage screening system. Clearly, the creation of a large, new Federal force is not necessarily the best way to address legitimate security concerns.

[From the Lincoln Journal Star, May 27, 2004]

NUCLEAR PLANT SPECIAL FORCE  
QUESTIONABLE

An alarmed Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham wants more and tighter security at government facilities that have radioactive material that could be fashioned into nuclear devices.

No argument here. The dangers of lax security at such sites are too awful to contemplate and too real to dismiss.

According to an account from The Associated Press, Abraham, in calling earlier this month for reforms, cited poor performance in mock security exercises and other failings—cheating on readiness tests, lost keys—by guards from private contractors.

Chief among Abraham's solutions to the problems he found: a federal police force to guard the facilities and an elite force to protect areas with the most sensitive nuclear weapons material.

Sounds impressive, until you consider how the last special force set up for national security has done.

That force—the hardworking men and women of the Transportation Security Administration—still hasn't proved that it can reliably protect the nation's commercial airports.

To be sure, they're trying.

Since the agency started work Nov. 19, 2002, it geared up with some 60,000 people to screen passengers and their luggage. Congress has since limited that number to 45,000, so the agency has raised and lowered staffing at airports here and there to meet demand.

The agency professionals have confiscated thousands of banned objects from often bewildered, sometimes bemused travelers: guns and garrotes; straight razors and knitting needles; tin snips and butter knives.

There is also little doubt the agency has thwarted dangerous incidents long before they reached any newspaper's front page and for that it should be honored and thanked.

But the Transportation Security Administration's still young and still learning some hard lessons. Among them that shake public faith:

In November, a college student secreted box cutters through airport checkpoints and onto at least two planes. He sent an e-mail to federal authorities saying he had put the items aboard two specific Southwest Airlines flights. The objects were not found until five weeks later.

In November, an Eppley Airfield baggage screener was charged with dealing cocaine after 8 ounces of cocaine, 7 grams of crack cocaine and manufacturing equipment were found in his Omaha home. According to the AP, between 1993 and 1997 the man was convicted of six misdemeanors including obstructing an officer and disorderly conduct.

In October, it was reported that written tests given potential baggage screeners never